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United States of Europe

Winston Churchill

Extract from speech at the University of Zurich,
19 September 1946

Churchill was undoubtedly one of the great inspirers of the post-war movement towards European integration. In 1940, he had proposed – in vain – an ‘indissoluble union’ between Britain and France, and his immense prestige as Britain’s war leader, despite his rejection in the general election of 1945, gave his words enormous resonance throughout continental Europe. In a series of speeches, he appealed for reconciliation between Germany and her former enemies, and he electrified his audience at Zurich with his call for the creation of a United States of Europe. In Britain he set up the United Europe Movement, which was largely responsible for the founding of the Council of Europe in 1948. Churchill later disappointed his many European admirers when, on becoming Prime Minister again in 1951, he made no effort to bring Britain into the European Coal and Steel Industry which had been created six months earlier. In reality, though Churchill had grand romantic ideas about European unity, and was often carried away by his own exuberance in presenting them, a close reading of his speeches reveals that he did not envisage his own country playing more than a semi-detached role.

I wish to speak to you today about the tragedy of Europe. This noble continent, comprising on the whole the fairest and the most cultivated regions of the earth, enjoying a temperate and equable climate, is the home of all the great parent races of the Western world. It is the fountain of Christian faith and Christian ethics. It is the origin of most of the culture, arts, philosophy and science both of ancient and modern times. If Europe were once united in the sharing of its common inheritance, there would be no limit to the happiness, to the prosperity and glory which its three or four hundred million people would enjoy. Yet it is from Europe that have sprung that series of frightful nationalistic quarrels, originated by the Teutonic nations, which we have seen even in this

twentieth century and in our own lifetime, wreck the peace and mar the prospects of all mankind.

And what is the plight to which Europe has been reduced? Some of the smaller states have indeed made a good recovery, but over wide areas a vast quivering mass of tormented, hungry, care-worn and bewildered human beings gape at the ruins of their cities and homes, and scan the dark horizons for the approach of some new peril, tyranny or terror. Among the victors there is a babel of jarring voices; among the vanquished the sullen silence of despair. That is all that Europeans, grouped in so many ancient states and nations, that is all that the Germanic powers have got by tearing each other to pieces and spreading havoc far and wide. Indeed, but for the fact that the great Republic across the Atlantic Ocean has at length realized that the ruin or enslavement of Europe would involve their own fate as well, and has stretched out hands of succour and guidance, the Dark Ages would have returned in all their cruelty and squalor. They may still return.

Yet all the while there is a remedy which, if it were generally and spontaneously adopted, would as if by a miracle transform the whole scene, and would in a few years make all Europe, or the greater part of it, as free and as happy as Switzerland is today. What is this sovereign remedy? It is to re-create the European Family, or as much of it as we can, and provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom. We must build a kind of United States of Europe. In this way only will hundreds of millions of toilers be able to regain the simple joys and hopes which make life worth living. The process is simple. All that is needed is the resolve of hundreds of millions of men and women to do right instead of wrong and gain as their reward blessing instead of cursing.

Much work has been done upon this task by the exertions of the Pan-European Union which owes so much to Count Coudenhove-Kalergi and which commanded the services of the famous French patriot and statesman, Aristide Briand. There is also that immense body of doctrine and procedure, which was brought into being amid high hopes after the First World War, as the League of Nations. The League of Nations did not fail because of its principles or conceptions. It failed because these principles were deserted by those states who had brought it into being. It failed because the governments of those days feared to face the facts, and act while time remained. This disaster must not be repeated. There is therefore much knowledge and material with which to build; and also bitter dear-bought experience.

I was very glad to read in the newspapers two days ago that my friend President Truman had expressed his interest and sympathy with this great design. There is no reason why a regional organization of Europe should in any way conflict with the world organization of the United Nations. On the contrary, I believe that the larger synthesis will only survive if it is founded upon coherent natural groupings. There is already a natural grouping in the Western Hemisphere. We British have our own Commonwealth of Nations. These do not weaken, on the contrary they strengthen, the world organization. They are in fact its main support. And why should there not be a European group which could give a sense of enlarged patriotism and common citizenship to the distracted peoples of this turbulent and mighty continent and why should it not take its rightful place with other great groupings in shaping the destinies of men? In order that this should be accomplished there must be an act of faith in which millions of families speaking many languages must consciously take part.

We all know that the two world wars through which we have passed arose out of the vain passion of a newly united Germany to play the dominating part in the world. In this last struggle crimes and massacres have been committed for which there is no parallel since the invasions of the Mongols in the fourteenth century and no equal at any time in human history. The guilty must be punished. Germany must be deprived of the power to rearm and make another aggressive war. But when all this has been done, as it will be done, as it is being done, there must be an end to retribution. There must be what Mr Gladstone many years ago called 'a blessed act of oblivion'. We must all turn our backs upon the horrors of the past. We must look to the future. We cannot afford to drag forward across the years that are to come the hatreds and revenges which have sprung from the injuries of the past. If Europe is to be saved from infinite misery, and indeed from final doom, there must be an act of faith in the European family and an act of oblivion against all the crimes and follies of the past.

Can the free peoples of Europe rise to the height of these resolves of the soul and instincts of the spirit of man? If they can, the wrongs and injuries which have been inflicted will have been washed away on all sides by the miseries which have been endured. Is there any need for further floods of agony? Is it the only lesson of history that mankind is unteachable? Let there be justice, mercy and freedom. The peoples have only to will it, and all will achieve their hearts' desire.

I am now going to say something that will astonish you. The first step in the re-creation of the European family must be a partnership between

France and Germany. In this way only can France recover the moral leadership of Europe. There can be no revival of Europe without a spiritually great France and a spiritually great Germany. The structure of the United States of Europe, if well and truly built, will be such as to make the material strength of a single state less important. Small nations will count as much as large ones and gain their honour by their contribution to the common cause. The ancient states and principalities of Germany, freely joined together for mutual convenience in a federal system, might each take their individual place among the United States of Europe. I shall not try to make a detailed programme for hundreds of millions of people who want to be happy and free, prosperous and safe, who wish to enjoy the four freedoms of which the great President Roosevelt spoke, and live in accordance with the principles embodied in the Atlantic Charter. If this is their wish they have only to say so, and means can certainly be found, and machinery erected, to carry that wish into full fruition.

But I must give you a warning. Time may be short. At present there is a breathing-space. The cannon have ceased firing. The fighting has stopped; but the dangers have not stopped. If we are to form the United States of Europe or whatever name or form it may take, we must begin now.

In these present days we dwell strangely and precariously under the shield and protection of the atomic bomb. The atomic bomb is still only in the hands of a State and nation which we know will never use it except in the cause of right and freedom. But it may well be that in a few years this awful agency of destruction will be widespread and the catastrophe following from its use by several warring nations will not only bring to an end all that we call civilization, but may possibly disintegrate the globe itself.

I must now sum up the propositions which are before you. Our constant aim must be to build and fortify the strength of UNO [United Nations Organization]. Under and within that world concept we must recreate the European family in a regional structure called, it may be, the United States of Europe. The first step is to form a Council of Europe. If at first all the States of Europe are not willing or able to join the Union, we must nevertheless proceed to assemble and combine those who will and those who can. The salvation of the common people of every race and of every land from war or servitude must be established on solid foundations and must be guarded by the readiness of all men and women to die rather than submit to tyranny. In all this urgent work, France and Germany must take the lead together. Great Britain, the British Commonwealth of Nations, mighty America, and I trust Soviet Russia – for then indeed all would be well – must be the friends and sponsors of the new Europe and must champion its right to live and shine.

2 Toward European Unity

George Orwell

Article from the *Partisan Review*, July–August 1947

The name of George Orwell is not widely associated with the drive for European unity. He is better known for what he was against – totalitarianism in all its forms, the wilful distortion of truth, the evils of colonialism, the injustice of the class system and the tragic waste of avoidable poverty. After the Second World War, no doubt subconsciously influenced by his debilitating struggle against the tuberculosis which was to kill him at the age of 46, he went through a phase of deep pessimism which culminated in the writing of his most celebrated work, Nineteen Eighty-Four. Yet he was never the victim of total despair, believing that there was at least a fragile hope that mankind would avoid either nuclear destruction or the bleak future which he foretold in his final novel. That hope was that Europe, under democratic Socialist leadership, would succeed in coming together and create a decent society which would 'make life tolerable and even offer some hope of progress'. The prospects, as well as the difficulties of such a development, were spelled out in this little-known article, which appeared in the left-wing but anti-Communist American magazine, Partisan Review.

A Socialist today is in the position of a doctor treating an all but hopeless case. As a doctor, it is his duty to keep the patient alive, and therefore to assume that the patient has at least a chance of recovery. As a scientist, it is his duty to face the facts, and therefore to admit that the patient will probably die. Our activities as Socialists only have meaning if we assume that Socialism *can* be established, but if we stop to consider what probably *will* happen, then we must admit I think, that the chances are against us. If I were a bookmaker, simply calculating the probabilities and leaving my own wishes out of account, I would give odds against the survival of civilization within the next few hundred years. As far as I can see, there are three possibilities ahead of us:

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1. That the Americans will decide to use the atomic bomb while they have it and the Russians haven't. This would solve nothing. It would do away with the particular danger that is now presented by the USSR, but would lead to the rise of new empires, fresh rivalries, more wars, more atomic bombs, etc. In any case this is, I think, the least likely outcome of the three, because a preventive war is not easily committed by a country that retains any traces of democracy.
2. That the present 'cold war' will continue until the USSR, and several other countries, have atomic bombs as well. Then there will only be a short breathing-space before whizz! go the rockets, wallop! go the bombs, and the industrial centres of the world are wiped out, probably beyond repair. Even if any one state, or group of states, emerges from such a war as technical victor, it will probably be unable to build up the machine civilization anew. The world, therefore, will once again be inhabited by a few million, or a few hundred million human beings living by subsistence agriculture, and probably, after a couple of generations, retaining no more of the culture of the past than a knowledge of how to smelt metals. Conceivably this is a desirable outcome, but obviously it has nothing to do with Socialism.
3. That the fear inspired by the atomic bomb and other weapons yet to come will be so great that everyone will refrain from using them. This seems to me the worst possibility of all. It would mean the division of the world among two or three vast super-states, unable to conquer one another and unable to be overthrown by any internal rebellion. In all probability their structure would be hierarchic, with a semi-divine caste at the top and outright slavery at the bottom, and the crushing out of liberty would exceed anything that the world has yet seen. Within each state the necessary psychological atmosphere would be kept up by complete severance from the outer world, and by a continuous phony war against rival states. Civilizations of this type might remain static for thousands of years.

Most of the dangers that I have outlined existed and were foreseeable long before the atomic bomb was invented. The only way of avoiding them that I can imagine is to present somewhere or other, on a large scale, the spectacle of a community where people are relatively free and happy and where the main motive in life is not the pursuit of money or power. In other words, democratic Socialism must be made to work throughout some large area. But the only area in which it could conceivably be made to work, in any near future, is Western Europe. Apart from Australia and New Zealand, the tradition of democratic Socialism can only be said to exist

– and even there it only exists precariously – in Scandinavia, Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, the Low Countries, France, Britain, Spain, and Italy. Only in those countries are there still large numbers of people to whom the word 'Socialism' has some appeal and for whom it is bound up with liberty, equality, and internationalism.

Elsewhere it either has no foothold or it means something different. In North America the masses are contented with capitalism, and one cannot tell what turn they will take when capitalism begins to collapse. In the USSR there prevails a sort of oligarchical collectivism which could only develop into democratic Socialism against the will of the ruling minority. Into Asia, even the word 'Socialism' has barely penetrated. The Asiatic nationalist movements are either Fascist in character, or look towards Moscow, or manage to combine both attitudes: and at present all movements among the coloured peoples are tinged by racial mysticism. In most of South America the position is essentially similar, so is it in Africa and the Middle East. Socialism does not exist anywhere, but even as an idea it is at present valid only in Europe. Of course, Socialism cannot properly be said to be established until it is world-wide, but the process must begin somewhere, and I cannot imagine it beginning except through the federation of the Western European states transformed into Socialist republics without colonial dependencies. Therefore a Socialist United States of Europe seems to me the only worthwhile political objective today. Such a federation would contain about 250 million people, including perhaps half the skilled industrial workers of the world. I do not need to be told that the difficulties of bringing any such thing into being are enormous and terrifying, and I will list some of them in a moment. But we ought not to feel that it is of its nature impossible, or that countries so different from one another would not voluntarily unite. A Western European union is in itself a less improbable concatenation than the Soviet Union or the British empire.

Now as to the difficulties. The greatest difficulty of all is the apathy and conservatism of people everywhere, their unawareness of danger, their inability to imagine anything new – in general, as Bertrand Russell put it recently, the unwillingness of the human race to acquiesce in its own survival. But there are also active malignant forces working against European unity, and there are existing economic relationships on which the European peoples depend for their standard of life and which are not compatible with true Socialism. I list what seem to me to be the four main obstacles, explaining each of them as shortly as I can manage:

1. Russian hostility. The Russians cannot but be hostile to a European union not under their own control. The reasons, both the pretended and the real ones, are obvious. One has to count therefore, with the danger of a preventive war, with the systematic terrorizing of the smaller nations, and with the sabotage of the Communist Parties everywhere. Above all there is the danger that the European masses will continue to believe in the Russian myth. As long as they believe it, the idea of a Socialist Europe will not be sufficiently magnetic to call forth the necessary effort.
2. American hostility. If the United States remains capitalist, and especially if it needs markets for exports, it cannot regard a Socialist Europe with a friendly eye. No doubt it is less likely than the USSR to intervene with brute force, but American pressure is an important factor because it can be exerted most easily on Britain, the one country in Europe which is outside the Russian orbit. Since 1940 Britain has kept its feet against the European dictators at the expense of becoming almost a dependency of the USA. Indeed, Britain can only get free of America by dropping the attempt to be an extra-European power. The English-speaking Dominions, colonial dependencies, except perhaps in Africa, and even Britain's supplies of oil, are all hostages in American hands. Therefore there is always the danger that the United States will break up any European coalition by drawing Britain out of it.
3. Imperialism. The European peoples, and especially the British, have long owed their high standard of life to direct or indirect exploitation of the coloured peoples. This relationship has never been made clear by official Socialist propaganda, and the British worker, instead of being told that, by world standards, he is living above his income, has been taught to think of himself as an overworked, down-trodden slave. To the masses everywhere 'Socialism' means, or at least is associated with, higher wages, shorter hours, better houses, all-round social insurance, etc., etc. But it is by no means certain that we can afford these things if we throw away the advantages we derive from colonial exploitation. However evenly the national income is divided up, if the income as a whole falls, the working-class standard of living must fall with it. At best there is liable to be a long and uncomfortable reconstruction period for which public opinion has nowhere prepared. But at the same time the European nations must stop being exploiters abroad if they are to build true Socialism at home. The first step toward a European Socialist federation is for the British to get out of India. But this entails something else. If the United States of Europe is to be self-sufficient and able to hold its own against Russia and

America, it must include Africa and the Middle East. But that means that the position of the indigenous peoples in those countries must be changed out of recognition – that Morocco or Nigeria or Abyssinia must cease to be colonies or semi-colonies and become autonomous republics on a complete equality with the European peoples. This entails a vast change of outlook and a bitter, complex struggle which is not likely to be settled without bloodshed. When the pinch comes the forces of imperialism will turn out to be extremely strong, and the British worker, if he has been taught to think of Socialism in materialistic terms, may ultimately decide that it is better to remain an imperial power at the expense of playing second fiddle to America. In varying degrees all the European peoples, at any rate those who are to form part of the proposed union, will be faced with the same choice.

4. The Catholic Church. As the struggle between East and West becomes more naked, there is danger that democratic Socialists and mere reactionaries will be driven into combining in a sort of Popular Front. The Church is the likeliest bridge between them. In any case the Church will make every effort to capture and sterilize any movement aiming at European unity. The dangerous thing about the Church is that it is not reactionary in the ordinary sense. It is not tied to laissez-faire capitalism or to the existing class system, and will not necessarily perish with them. It is perfectly capable of coming to terms with Socialism, or appearing to do so, provided that its own position is safeguarded. But if it is allowed to survive as a powerful organization, it will make the establishment of true Socialism impossible, because its influence is and always must be against freedom of thought and speech, against human equality, and against any form of society tending to promote earthly happiness.

When I think of these and other difficulties, when I think of the enormous mental readjustment that would have to be made, the appearance of a Socialist United States of Europe seems to me a very unlikely event. I don't mean that the bulk of the people are not prepared for it, in a passive way. I mean that I see no person or group of persons with the slightest chance of attaining power and at the same time with the imaginative grasp to see what is needed and to demand the necessary sacrifices from their followers. But I also can't at present see any other hopeful objective. At one time I believed that it might be possible to form the British empire into a federation of Socialist republics, but if that chance ever existed, we lost it by failing to liberate India, and by our attitude toward the

coloured peoples generally. It may be that Europe is finished and that in the long run some better form of society will arise in India or China. But I believe that it is only in Europe, if anywhere, that democratic Socialism could be made a reality in short enough time to prevent the dropping of the atom bombs.

Of course, there are reasons, if not for optimism, at least for suspending judgement on certain points. One thing in our favour is that a major war is not likely to happen immediately. We could, I suppose, have the kind of war that consists in shooting rockets, but not a war involving the mobilization of tens of millions of men. At present any large army would simply melt away, and that may remain true for ten or even 20 years. Within that time some unexpected things might happen. For example, a powerful Socialist movement might for the first time arise in the United States. In England it is now the fashion to talk of the United States as 'capitalistic', with the implication that this is something unalterable, a sort of racial characteristic like the colour of eyes or hair. But in fact it cannot be unalterable, since capitalism itself has manifestly no future, and we cannot be sure in advance that the next change in the United States will not be a change for the better.

Then, again, we do not know what changes will take place in the USSR if war can be staved off for the next generation or so. In a society of that type, a radical change of outlook always seems unlikely, not only because there can be no open opposition but because the regime, with its complete hold over education, news, etc., deliberately aims at preventing the pendulum swing between generations which seems to occur naturally in liberal societies. But for all we know the tendency of one generation to reject the ideas of the last is an abiding human characteristic which even the NKVD will be unable to eradicate. In that case there may by 1960 be millions of young Russians who are bored by dictatorship and loyalty parades, eager for more freedom, and friendly in their attitude toward the West.

Or again, it is even possible that if the world falls apart into three unconquerable super-states, the liberal tradition will be strong enough within the Anglo-American section of the world to make life tolerable and even offer some hope of progress. But all this is speculation. The actual outlook, so far as I can calculate the probabilities, is very dark, and any serious thought should start out from that fact.

3 The Schuman Plan

Robert Schuman

**Extract from Press conference by Robert Schuman,
9 May 1950**

The Schuman Plan, which led to the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), was devised to resolve a deadlock between France and West Germany concerning the Saarland, and the French desire to prevent its powerful coal and steel industries being merged with the rest of Germany's production, which they feared would lead once more to German economic domination of Europe. The solution proposed was to transfer broad control over the two industries in both countries to a supranational authority, an arrangement which would be open on similar terms to other European countries. The actual author of the plan was Jean Monnet (see Chapter 8), who was to become the first President of the High Authority of the ECSC. The French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, of Alsatian descent and born in Luxembourg, immediately saw the proposal as a means of bringing peace to the troubled border regions between France and Germany after some 75 years of conflict. The British government declined to participate, but six member states – France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands – all signed the Treaty of Paris on 18 April 1951, which set up the ECSC.

World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of constructive efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it. The contribution which an organized and living Europe can bring to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations. In taking upon herself for more than 20 years the role of champion of a united Europe, France has always had as her essential aim the service of peace. A united Europe was not achieved, and we have war.

Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single, general plan. It will be built through concrete achievements, which first create a *de facto* solidarity. The gathering of the nations of Europe requires the

elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany. The first concern in any action undertaken must be these two countries.

With this aim in view, the French government proposes that action be taken immediately on one limited but decisive point. The French government proposes that the whole of Franco-German coal and steel production be placed under a common 'higher authority', within the framework of an organization open to participation by the other countries of Europe.

The pooling of coal and steel production will immediately provide for the setting-up of common bases for economic development as a first step in the federation of Europe, and will change the destinies of those regions which have long been devoted to the manufacture of munitions of war, of which they have been the most constant victims.

The solidarity in production thus established will make it plain that any war between France and Germany becomes, not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible. The setting up of this powerful production unit, open to all countries willing to take part, and eventually capable of providing all the member countries with the basic elements of industrial production on the same terms, will lay the real foundations for their economic unification.

This production will be offered to the world as a whole without distinction or exception, with the aim of contributing to the raising of living standards and the promotion of peaceful achievements. Europe, with new means at her disposal, will be able to pursue the realization of one of her essential tasks, the development of the African continent.

In this way there will be realized, simply and speedily, that fusion of interests which is indispensable to the establishment of a common economic system; and that will be the leaven from which may grow a wider and deeper community between countries long opposed to one another by sanguinary divisions.

By pooling basic production and by setting up a new higher authority, whose decisions will be binding on France, Germany and other member countries, these proposals will build the first concrete foundation of the European Federation which is indispensable to the preservation of peace.

In order to promote the realization of the objectives it has thus defined, the French Government is ready to open negotiations on the following basis.

The task with which this common 'higher authority' will be charged will be that of securing in the shortest possible time the modernization of production and the improvement of its quality; the supply of coal and steel on identical terms to the French and German markets, as well as to

the markets of other member countries; the development in common of exports to other countries; and the equalization as well as improvement of the living conditions of the workers in these industries.

To achieve these objectives, starting from the very disparate conditions in which the productions of the member countries are at present situated, certain transitional measures will have to be instituted, such as a production and investment plan, compensating machinery for equalizing prices, and an amortization fund to facilitate the rationalization of production. The movement of coal and steel between member countries will immediately be freed of all Customs duties; it will not be permissible to apply differential transport rates to them. Conditions will gradually be created which will spontaneously ensure the most rational distribution of production at the highest level of productivity.

In contrast to international cartels, which aim at dividing up and exploiting the national markets by means of restrictive practices and the maintenance of high profits, the proposed organization will ensure the fusion of the markets and the expansion of production ...

The common High Authority entrusted with the working of the whole scheme will consist of independent persons chosen by the governments on a basis of equality; a president will be chosen by common agreement by the governments; its decisions will be mandatory in France, in Germany and in the other member countries. Appropriate provisions will ensure the necessary channels of appeal against the decisions of the High Authority. A representative of the United Nations accredited to this authority will be charged with making a public report twice a year to the United Nations Organization dealing with the working of the new organization, particularly with regard to the safeguarding of its peaceful objectives.

The institution of the High Authority does not in any way prejudice the system of ownership of firms. In undertaking its task, the common High Authority will take into account the powers conferred on the International Ruhr Authority and the obligations of all types imposed on Germany to the extent that these are still in force.